

# BASIC BLACK

No bells, no whistles, just muscle

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JERRY HEASLEY

**"A FRIEND OF MINE WHO KNOWS MUSTANGS REAL WELL CALLED ME. HE SAID HE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO BUY A COBRA JET CONVERTIBLE. I FLAT TOLD HIM, 'BE CAREFUL. THEY ARE VERY, VERY RARE.'"**

Rick Parker's warning was to check it out and make sure the engine option was factory for the chassis. Of course, Fords have the engine coded into the VIN. It's not like you have to match numbers, engine to chassis, like you do with Chevrolets and other GM musclecars. Still, this was 1992 and years before Ford Motor Company could document a 1967 and later Ford.

Rick fast-forwarded his story to a day when he stopped by his friend's office. As fate would have it, the guys were all sitting around and laughing. In the trash can was a Fed Ex envelope with pictures.

The friend said, "Hey, remember that Cobra Jet convertible I found?" The sad shape of the car was the object of their laughter. Rick dug through the trash to retrieve the images of the '69 Mustang. The motor was out of the vehicle and it "looked like crap."

We love Rick's vision. He told us, "The Mustang was ugly. But, heck, you can fix ugly."

Rick called up the seller and hopped a plane from his home in Columbus, Ohio, to Daytona Beach, Florida. Before the actual purchase, he got the Lois Eminger paper work, which "took a little while." The data plate on the inside edge of the driver's door had the R-code, for the 428 Cobra Jet with shaker. The VIN was a match, too, and had the R in the fifth slot. A Q-code would have been a non-ram air 428 CJ.

The body was in "numerous colors" and the paper work as well as the trim tag verified black exterior, black interior, black top. Triple black was Rick's No. 1 choice for this muscle Mustang. He could scarcely believe his luck. "Musclecar" accurately described the build of this '69, despite the convertible body style.







## 1968-1970 428 COBRA JET PRIMER

Is it a CJ, a CJ-R, an SCJ, an SCJ-R or a Super Drag Pack?

There is a great deal of confusion today over the nomenclature used to describe 1968-1970 Mustang Cobra Jet musclecars.

Introduced April 1, 1968, the CJ was a production-based big-block tuned for true high performance. What made the CJ a CJ was the hot rod assortment of parts, including heads similar to the Ford 427 Low Riser with bigger ports, a camshaft from the 390 GT engine, a cast iron copy of the 428 Police Interceptor intake

manifold, streamlined cast iron exhaust manifolds, and a 735 cfm Holley four-barrel carburetor.

For 1968-1/2, all Cobra Jets were coded "R" in the fifth digit of the VIN, and all were ram air, featuring an air cleaner and flapper assembly mounted underneath the hood. A small scoop sat atop the hood to admit cold air to the Holley four barrel.

Then, in 1969/70, the base Cobra Jet was coded "Q", while the CJ-R, for Cobra Jet with ram air, was coded "R". Mustangs (except Shelseys) with "R" code engines came with a shaker scoop that protruded through the hood and rock 'n rolled with the rumbling big block below.

The CJ-R, then, had ram air. The CJ did not. That's simple. What's a little harder to understand is either the "Q" code CJ or the "R" code CJ-R could be made into a Super Cobra Jet (SCJ, aka SCJ-R) with the Drag Pack option. Drag Pack Cobra Jets were made with or without ram air.

A common misconception is that 428 SCJs had solid lifters, which is not true.

Another common misconception is that "R" code 428s are SCJs, which is also false.

The 428 SCJs were built with drag strip duty in mind, which is why Ford beefed the bottom end, and added an engine oil cooler, but left the top end alone. SCJs came with hardened steel cast cranks (regular CJs had nodular iron cast cranks) and LeMans rods, externally balanced with a large vibration damper. Of course, already, the CJ was stock with a nodular cased nine-inch differential and 31-spline axles.

SCJs did not have a unique engine code, but they were mandatory with either a 3.91:1 Traction-Lok (code V), or a 4.30:1 Detroit Locker (code W). Therefore, any other rear axle code on an original data plate proves the 428 was not a Super Cobra Jet. Also, only Drag Pack Mustangs came with 3.91 or 4.30 rear gears. Drag Packs with the 4.30:1 Detroit Locker axle code "W" were referred to in some original literature as "Super Drag Packs," further complicating the nomenclature.

In addition to the 428 CJ and shaker hood scoop, the car had very few options, consisting of the automatic C6 transmission, power top, AM radio and 3.50:1 gears in a Traction-Lok differential.

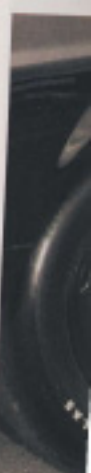
The car deserved a ground-up restoration. Rick put the Mustang Cobra Jet back to concours, neither adding to or

taking away from the way it was delivered to Stokes Ford in Alabama.

What intrigued him most was the car had no stripes, like a Boss 302. It had no rear window slats or spoilers front or rear. Like most of us, Rick has spent years drag racing. Stock, this Mustang looked like a warrior on the strip. Rick recalled

the sight of a '62 Chevy with dog dish hubcaps. The owner would merely "pop off the little hub caps, pull into the lights and go drag racing."

That's what excited Rick about the car. He appropriately assesses the Ford's allure with the sentiment, "No bells, no whistles, just muscle."



## RARITY, THY NAME IS COBRA JET CONVERTIBLE

Nineteen-sixty-nine Cobra Jet convertibles are truly rare, especially in the Mustangs which are not Shelby's.

Production was 407 for 1969 in the ram air. Of these, 334 were Shelby GT-500s, leaving 73 Mustangs produced with ram air Cobra Jet big-blocks. There were an additional 50 non-ram air 428 Cobra Jets, all of which were pure Mustang. All Shelby's came with ram air.

The ram air Mustang has a unique musclecar status for 1969 due to the shaker scoop. None of the Shelby's had the shaker. These cars had more of a luxury-cruiser status about them.

Total Mustang 428 Cobra Jet convertible production for 1969, then, was 123, which is why these cars are seldom seen. ■



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